

Known only as “opposite Little Rock” until the Civil War, North Little Rock grew as a crossroads that linked river and overland traffic with markets to the East and Southwest. French explorer Jean-Baptiste Benard de La Harpe led an expedition up the Arkansas River in 1722 to investigate rumors of a rock of topaz or emerald rising out of the water and discovered Big Rock Mountain, which he named French Rock. In the early 1800s, the north side attracted hunters and a few settlers. Edmund Hogan established a ferry terminal on the north shore across from the “little rock,” between today’s Old Junction and Main Street bridges. Wright Daniel, who lived at the foot of Big Rock by 1814, started the state’s first stage coach line in 1826 between the north shore terminal and Arkansas Post. Another ferry operator, David Rorer, began service in 1832 at the end of what is now Locust Street. During the Indian Removal -- the Trail of Tears -- in the 1830s and 1840s, the north side was a principal junction for the movement of people to Oklahoma and the Red River.

A low-lying land of swamps and cypress trees amid fertile ground nourished by recurring floods, the north side was home to farms and plantations but no town. A group of investors in 1838 platted a 100-acre townsite called DeCantillon (after surveyor Richard DeCantillon Collins) and sold a few lots along the river between today’s Main Street and Broadway bridges. Those dreams, however, were washed away in the Flood of 1840. William E. Woodruff, founder of the Arkansas Gazette, also tried in 1865 to sell lots on the north side for a proposed townsite named Quapaw, immediately east of today’s Interstate 30

Bridge. By then, the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad had built a terminal near the ferry landing across from Little Rock. The Union army took over the railroad in 1863, constructing a complex of shops and warehouses that took the name of Huntersville. In 1866, the heirs of landowner Thomas W. Newton platted a town they called Argenta, named for the silver mines Newton had managed in what is now Kellogg Acres. Its boundary stretched from the river on the south to Giles (now Eighth Street) on the north and from Newton Avenue (now Main Street) on the west and Woodruff (now Locust Street) on the east. Growing up around the railroad industry that developed in the 1870s, Argenta prospered as an unincorporated town of mills, factories, hotels and saloons. The Baring Cross Bridge spanned the river in 1873, the first of three railroad bridges. The free bridge, so called because no toll was charged, was built in 1897 and is now the Main Street Bridge.

Little Rock had annexed Argenta and adjacent territories in 1890 and made it the capital city's Eighth Ward, but 14 years later a group of north side businessmen led by William C. Faucette won independence by reclaiming Argenta. Through trickery, they first backed incorporation in 1901 of the Town of North Little Rock, north of 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and then conspired with a handpicked group of legislators in 1903 to pass the "Hoxie-Walnut Ridge" bill, which apparently would have allowed only those two northeast Arkansas cities to consolidate. To Little Rock's surprise, however, the law permitted any city within a mile of another to merge with all or part of that city. North Little Rock and Argenta residents voted in July 1903 to merge.

Little Rock mounted a court challenge, but on February 6, 1904, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled in favor of North Little Rock. A city of more than 8,000 residents had been born on the north side. In January 1905, Baring Cross, which incorporated in 1896, became part of North Little Rock through voluntary annexation. North Little Rock changed its name to Argenta in January 1906, but renamed itself North Little Rock in October 1917.